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Constructing potentials of territorial and infra-landscape development for small peripheral cities of the metropolitan city of Tunis Exemple of Tebourba

Yasmine ATTIA BENCHERIFA^{ab}, Hichem REJEB^b

^a Higher Institute of Environmental Technologies of Urban Planning and Building, 2 Rue de l'Artisanat Chargaia 2, 2035 Tunis, Tunisia.

^b Higher Institute of Agronomy-Chott Mariem Sousse, University of Sousse, BP 47, 4042 Chott Mariem, Sousse, Tunisia.

Abstract

In developing the performance of the Tunis city, including economic performance, one should begin with recognition and a radical change in its space and landscape character. This new way of understanding the territory has led us to think about different strategies of knowledge regarding of the metropolis of Tunis, which focuses on already existing spaces and landscape while at the same time as proposing new forms of development that focus on the place and role of the citizen in the city. These ideas experimented with in other countries, challenge conventional methods of design and use of public space, which are often out of touch with current social practices. This metropolitan area invented by the planners will not be the city that tourists come to visit, or that is found in the mental images of many Tunisians. It would be a set of territories composed of a multitude of places and distinct landscapes, local stories and architectural and urban forms that would must be identified, redefined and enhanced. This research attempts to address metropolitan space and landscape not based on coherent spatial models but from infra-landscapes composed of landscape fragments and unfinished models.

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1. Introduction:

The metropolitan Tunis is located in the north of Tunisia, at the bottom of the Gulf of Tunis. It stretches along coastal plain and neighboring hills. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2014, the metropolis of Tunis

contained an agglomeration of 2.6 millions Inhabitants. In the wake of the French protectorate, its population had not exceeded 100.000 inhabitants. These different rates of growth and methods of organization that the large city has witnessed are still in permanent development and anticipate the establishment of „a metropolitan area,, (Chabbi, 2014). In order to promote and spread the metropolis of Tunis, and according to governmental strategic planning, some strategies of territorial development have been followed based on promoting export and call on foreign capitals (Chabbi, 2005) in order to establish punctual projects in strategic areas of the metropolis equipped with attractive landscapes as diverse as coastal zones, heritage sites, central areas, etc. those projects are concentrated mainly in the Lake of Tunis (Lac de Tunis), the Sebkhha of Ariana and over the hills of Carthage with the aim to create a new image of the metropolis (Rejeb and al., 2012). In fact, those strategies have involved the development of metropolitan areas regardless of others which are considered as less attractive, secondary and ordinary. Occupying an important territorial surface, these areas have experienced some territorial development based on humble emergency planning, but have never involved the establishment of a metropolitan image.

Many theorists, such as Dewwarat and Al. (2003), Lelli (2000), Meining (1997), Bigando (2008) have stressed the importance of ordinary landscapes which look familiar. Such landscapes, termed as „infra-landscapes” are often omitted and depreciated. This term can extend to include abandoned, negligible, uncertain, temporary and vacant landscapes. This study will shed light on one of the „infra-landscapes” of the metropolitan Tunis, also known as peripheral cities, which are located a few kilometers from the city center. Those small cities have not developed a process of fast urbanization or typical empowerment, since their urban and spatial growth is still dependent on local and regional dynamics boosted by some demographic transitions, burden of residential mobility, commuting migration, and above all the development of metropolitan economic activities, namely the industry (Kahloun, 2007). Such peripheral cities, are seen as less attractive, unpleasing, ordinary, abandoned and deprived of entertainment spaces with limited facilities, as they represent the forgotten territories left behind the territorial development of metropolitan Tunis. This research takes the example of „Tebourba city” as a metropolitan peripheral city. In this work, we will question the methods and the strategies, through which the small city of Tebourba can be comprehended, recognized and re-qualified, and redefined as a set of rich landscape situations enabling it to contribute to the metropolitan territorial development.

2. Materials and Methods:

This research addresses one of the small peripheral cities of metropolitan Tunis, namely Tebourba. It is located in north of Tunisia on the left bank of Medjerda River, with 34 Kilometers west of Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia. It was built on the Roman site „Thuburbo Minus” by the Andalousians and expanded by the French during the colonial era. It is renowned for its agriculture based on wheat production, olive oil and wine. Throughout this research, we try to highlight the capacity and the contribution of this city in the territorial development of metropolitan Tunis. In order to approach the peri-urban landscape of Tebourba city, we can distinguish two methods, retrospective and prospective. The retrospective approach aims to identify the physical, structural, spatial and visual components. It also allows to determine the existence of a landscape set or a landscape type. On the other hand, the prospective approach is based on the future and potential scenarios responsible for the territorial evolution of this peri-urban city with the aim of emphasizing the importance of new territories and „interstitial” areas that are often ignored.

3. Results and Discussions:

3.1. Tebourba city: an Infra-landscape to recognize:

“Recognition allows to bring something into existence from scratch, to see the unseen and to designate what is interesting” (Secchi, 2008). According to Donadieu (2002), landscape recognition takes into consideration, in the whole process of urban planning, the constituent elements, the characteristic features and the patterns, which form some perceptions of the concrete area that can be reorganized into a landscape. He defines the landscape recognition as an element allowing to assess the potentials of a concrete area.

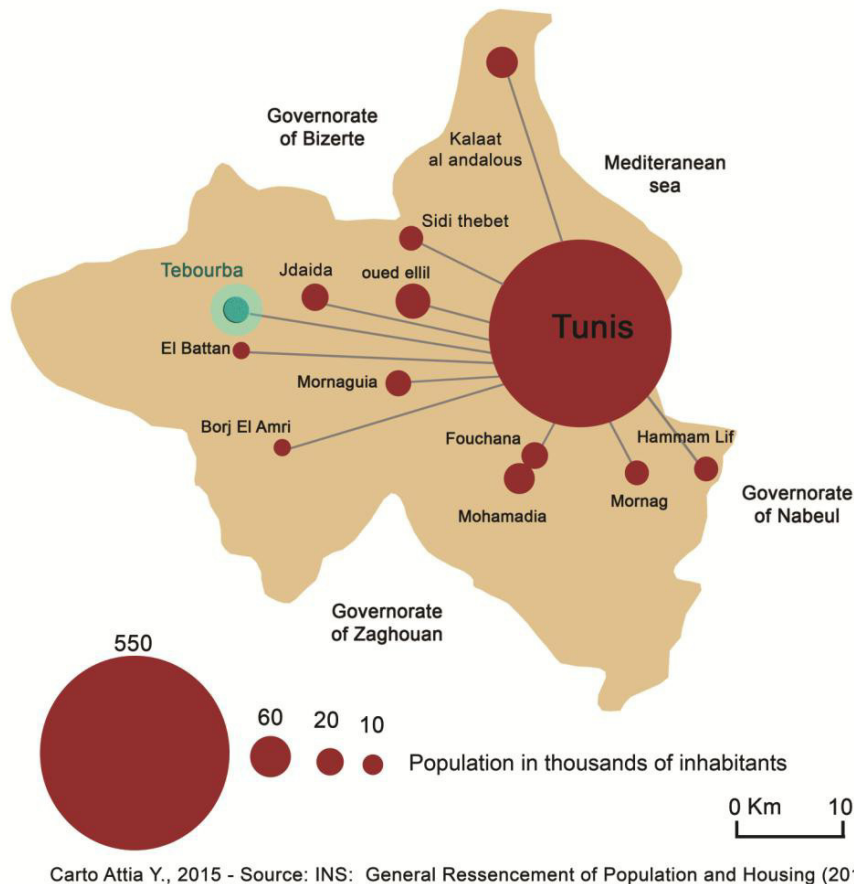


Fig.1. Tebourba one of the peripheral cities of Tunis.

3.1.1. Settlements and landscapes:

Tebourba city stretches on a surface area of about 28 750.5 Hectares, according to Agency of Urban Planning of Grand Tunis (AUGT, 2010). It's composed of very different landscapes in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. In the urban area, landscapes are arranged in large parts by the urban morphology (road network, division of building lots, building structure and activities) that changes from an era to another.

In the fourteenth century, Tebourba was a destroyed roman city surrounded by fertile lands, and then, reconstructed by the Moors coming from Andalusia. The latter introduced an urban planning made of a checkerboard pattern (road frame) with eight roads converging toward a rectangular square which covers the city's main facilities such as trade and mosque.

With the advent of colonists and the foundation of new facilities, the city was enlarged and developed its new center. Such an urban spread was for the benefit of the surrounding agricultural lands. It also fostered the creation of new urban centers composed of settlement in bands located in the north, the northwest and the south.

The increase of internal migration and the presence of a railway station in the northeast have facilitated the formation of new neighborhoods with some isolated villas (L6) which testifies the city's potentials to receive inhabitants with middle and high incomes in order to settle in the city and to benefit from the proximity of the

capital city, Tunis. The presence of Medjerda River has impeded the urban spread toward the west. All the peri-urban area is marked by the presence of spontaneous housing (L5). The diversity of settlement in Tebourba city has created an array of urban landscapes. They consists of 4 landscape sets: the first one is composed by the Andalusian housing (L1), the second is constructed by the colonial settlement, the third is formed by spontaneous housing, and by villas and building blocks (L4), and the last set is made of isolated villas (L6). Each landscape set is characterized by its specificity and its patrimonial, historic, cultural, and natural affluence that must be valued. The articulation between these landscape sets is almost absent, since it generated rejected interstitial areas, delicate and omitted considered as “Infra-landscapes”. These latters indicate the presence of new landscapes adorned with elements to be requalified.

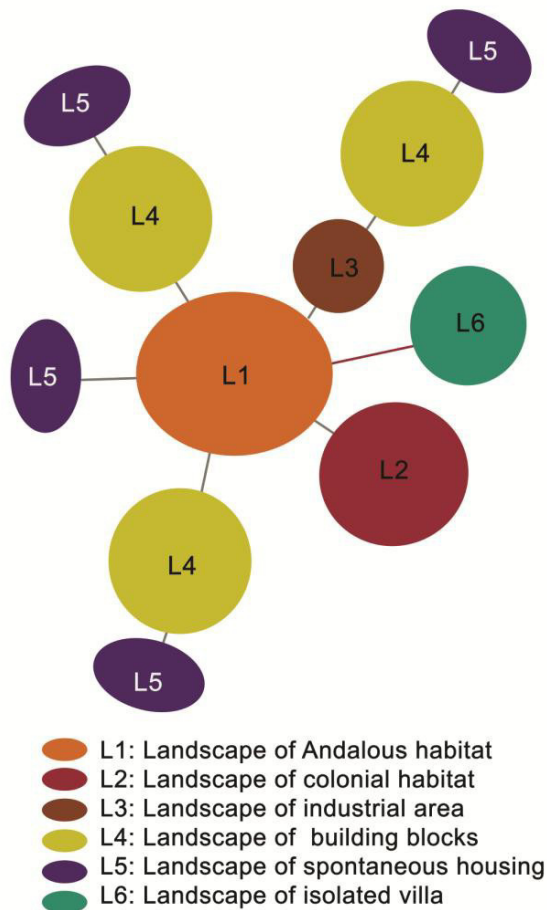


Fig 2. Cityscape sets in Tebourba city

3.1.2. Renowned Monuments and others under affirmation:

The Andalusian city, the church, the Marabou shrines (Zawia), the public library: all these landscape components, having a great heritage and historical value, bear witness of cultural and architectural wealth. The City of Tebourba was not confined by its areas published in postcards, brochures and websites. It is rather a large territory with an array of areas and with diverse and unique landscapes. As a backdrop, the topography rich of natural landscape elements represent the territory of the whole region with its water streams, forests and agricultural lands, such a territory is a monument by itself. Several delicate landscape elements, along with other ordinary and familiar ones

can be also considered as a monument in the city, since they mark the collective memory of its inhabitant and that they reflect a sense of belonging to the city. For example, public areas, markets, alleys, planted trees and even cemeteries that can be considered as monuments. These places, often reminiscent of death and at the same time peace, are characterized by their ordinary landscapes composed of rows of simple and almost identical steles without funerary monuments or other ostentatious features. Thus, they represent a unique scenery and one among landscape situations in the city. The closeness of Mejerda River to the city as a delicate natural landscape element is also a worth mentioning example. Considered as a hazardous area, the river is not taken into account in the spatial planning of the city. Its flood risk has restricted the urban sprawl to the west and encouraged the proliferation of non-regulatory settlement. The omnipresence of water in Tebourba must be seen as an asset to the city forming a variety of sceneries. The latters provide the cityscape set (L1) that consists of narrow alleys with an open space offering a better living environment for the inhabitants. This infra-cityscape should be recognized as a natural identifying monument in the city.

3.2. Requalification scenarios of Tebourba city:

3.2.1. Scenario 1: Tebourba, as a connected city:

This scenario highlights the connectivity of Tebourba city with its rural area, with other peripheral cities and finally with the city of Tunis.

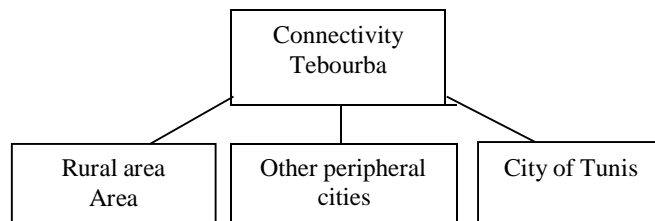


Fig.3. Type of connectivity in Tebourbacity

- The rich landscape of rural areas (presence of water, forest, mountains and agricultural lands) involves the development of the suburban area to create an outlet of the city toward its natural potentials. This interstitial area allows to connect two worlds that ignore each other (urban and rural). The city of Tebourba is a shelter of non-regulatory settlements (L5). It must be developed to minimize these spontaneous settlements and to be open to the rural landscape by creating access roads, areas of relaxation for city dwellers, places of discovery, of exchange and co-existence.
- Tebourba is located next to the cities of Jdaïda and Battan. The layout of the city needs to consider its intersection with other peripheral cities. This scenario can be materialized through the creation of an urban crown improving mobility and transportation between these promoting cities, linking the strengths of each region. This connectivity will enhance the external migration in the city of Tunis to these cities and reduce the density of the metropolis of Tunis.
- The direct relationship of Tebourba with the city of Tunis is fundamental on the social, economic and urban levels. Indeed, this relationship helps to meet the growing needs of housing and the eradication of non-regulatory settlements in the suburbs of metropolitan Tunis.

3.2.2. Scenario 2: Tebourba, a requalified ecological city

Preservation, sustainable use of ecosystems and valuing their contribution to human well-being can be achieved only through taking into consideration their functioning in territorial planning, urban planning and urban policy. The development of interstitial areas in the city (Transitional area between different landscape elements) is considered essential for the development of a sustainable and ecological landscape. It can be provided by the integration of

nature that is forgotten in the city and the development of ecological networks, the creation of pedestrian and bike paths, the reuse of abandoned sites, the densification of green spaces in the city which can be a source of evolution of an urban biodiversity. Medjerda River presents a major risk of floods, which stresses the need for building water tanks but also humid areas and ecological corridors where biodiversity can develop. The proliferation and diversification of natural elements in the city favors the creation of a microhabitat mosaic full of life (ants, birds, insects, butterflies etc.). This ecological continuity is sometimes interrupted by roads, urban voids, and abandoned, vacant, uncertain areas, etc. These omitted and unrecognized infra-landscapes may represent an insurmountable obstacle for endangered small animal species. Thus, the evolution of urban biodiversity is closely linked to the will to reclassify these infra-landscapes. (Table 1)

This requalification can develop urban biodiversity and increase green space areas by transforming them into more dynamic, more natural areas and rich in discoveries and adventures.

Table 1: Infra-landscapes and the possibility of their requalification

Infra-landscapes	Matrix	Eco-landscape Requalification
Andalusian architecture deprived of green spaces (L1)	Empty alleys, Emergency urban planning not mindful of the area specificity	Climbing plants along fences/ Concrete pavement
Abandoned landscapes (L4, L6, L1)	Abandoned ground with some denaturalization and urban elements	Reused buildings, community garden and spontaneous meadows.
Services/Facilities Administration (L2)	Shopping Centers, Offices Buildings	Parking spaces immersed in greenery
Collective housing (L4)	Collective buildings	Small public green spaces
Water body (L5)	Flood plains/ fauna and flora	Sea lettuce and algae Gerbils
Roof terraces(L1, L4, L6)	Inaccessible roof-terraces	Roof revegetation

4. Conclusion: Thinking of metropolitan Tunis with its suburbs:

Dreading the metropolis by its peripheral cities, requires a strengthening of the connectivity between them and with Tunis center which can be developed until the creation of new opportunities of housing for the metropolis inhabitants, until the extension of the metropolitan economic activities as well as the performances development and the quality of life of its cities.

This article focuses on the city of Tebourba which is an exemple of peripheral cities among others such as: Jdaïda, Battan, Mornaguia, Oued Ellil, Naasen, Mornag, Hammam Lif and so on and so forth. Each one is unique having its own specificities. They typify an infra-Landscape composed by a multitude of places and landscapes, local stories and architectural and urban forms that would be necessary identified, requalified and emphasized.

These cities establish a real potential for the creation of a new metropolitan image on the Mediterranean and why not the worldwide scale.

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